

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPG #0496 2371425
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 251425Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1687
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0116
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000496

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/25/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [EZ](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: CZECH SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP IN AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Mary Thompson-Jones, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Czech Special Operations Group (SOG), composed of 50-100 military police, was investigated by Czech authorities for alleged wrongdoing in Afghanistan, including wrongful deaths of Afghan civilians during its deployment, and irregularities in operations, procurement and chain of command. The investigation concluded the SOG was not involved in wrongful deaths. The Czech CHOD ordered the unit out of Afghanistan, the unit ceased to exist in July, and the Chief of Czech military police has resigned. The USG has over the years provided training and equipment to the SOG, but has provided no equipment since March 2009. End Summary.

The Special Operations Group

¶2. (C) The Czech Special Operations Group (SOG), composed of military police, was deployed to Afghanistan starting in late ¶2007. From then until early 2008, it worked in support of British and Danish forces. According to a Czech field-grade officer interviewed by departing Embassy Army Attache, during that time, the SOG was investigated by Czech authorities for possible involvement in wrongful deaths of Afghan civilians. Czech military officials also informed NATO of the investigation. The Czech investigation concluded that the wrongful death allegation was without merit. Embassy has no further independent information about the circumstances of the alleged incidents.

Investigation and Shakeup

¶3. (C) The Czech parliament also investigated the SOG, focusing on the SOG rotation that was in Helmand province from October 2007 to April 2008. Chief of the Czech General Staff Vlastimil Picek testified in a closed hearing before parliament on the matter in February 2008, and at least one Czech field grade officer and lower-level officer were interviewed as possible witnesses in January 2009. Departing Embassy Army Attache became aware of and looked into the allegations starting in late January 2009.

¶4. (C) Two other sources interviewed by Army Attache said that the SOG was investigated for alleged irregularities in its procurement processes and chain of command, and for dereliction of duty. The SOG was composed of 50-100 individuals who deployed to Afghanistan in 30-member teams. According to a Czech journalist who specializes in military and security issues who visited the SOG in Afghanistan, instead of going through the normal chain of command, the SOG reported to the head of Czech military police, who in turn reported to then-First Deputy Defense Minister (now Defense Minister) Bartak, becoming in effect an asset at Bartak's personal disposal.

¶5. (C) Parliament completed its investigation and did not find that the SOG was involved in wrongful deaths of Afghan civilians. However, General Picek ordered SOG personnel out of Afghanistan, the SOG officially ceased to exist as of 1 July 2009, and in the wake of the investigation, Czech Military Police Chief MG Kubat resigned.

USG Training and Equipping of the SOG

¶6. (C) The USG provided training and equipment to the SOG similar to the training and equipment provided to other regular units. Much of the training related to the law of war and the proper use of force. In FY 2009, the USG provided training to three personnel who were SOG members at some point (it is unclear whether they were SOG members at the time of the incident) in the following areas: the legal aspects of combating terrorism, small arms marksmanship, and a special operations curriculum.

¶7. (C) The USG has given the SOG approximately USD 6.1 million in equipment, including weapons, radios, night-vision goggles, and other equipment. The last provision of equipment was in the March 2009; equipment the SOG ordered that has not yet been delivered will be distributed to other Czech units.
Thompson-Jones